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## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Parent Attorneys & Guardian Ad Litem

**FROM:** Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director of Child Welfare Services

**CC:** Nora Sosnoff, Assistant Attorney General  
Todd A. Landry, Director

**DATE:** March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**TIME:** 1:40pm

**SUBJECT:** **Maine Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) Visitation Emergency Plan**

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### **\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS OCFS RESPONDS TO RAPIDLY CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS\***

The OCFS Executive Management Team has been developing guidance related to the Coronavirus as we face this challenge as local, national and international communities. It is of the utmost importance to ensure the health and well-being of staff, community partners, resource parents, families and children as we continue to provide services and support to youth and families in the State of Maine. I am sharing with you the information shared with OCFS Child Welfare staff. As additional information is available from the U.S. and Maine CDCs, OCFS will continue to provide additional direction.

#### **Visitation Protocol**

As a precaution and to ensure the safety of our staff and families, OCFS will be suspending all in person visits for the next two weeks, at which time the protocol will be reviewed. This includes family visitation at DHHS offices, visits arranged by resource parents and those held at contracted visitation agencies. To ensure that youth and families remain connected, it is expected that staff will coordinate contact to occur through phone calls and video conferencing. Supervision will be provided by resource parents, case aides or agency staff. The duration of calls or video conferences will depend on the age/ability of the children – for example, a 15-minute call or video conference with an infant to check in with the resource parent and observe the infant may be appropriate while a longer call or video conference may be needed for older children or youth.

For mothers who may be breastfeeding, we will request that they pump and coordinate for the breast milk to be provided to the resource parent for the child, adhering to health and wellbeing guidelines.

Any visitation that is currently supervised by resource parents should be directed to the caseworker and must be approved in advance and coordinated to ensure the health and safety of children and others involved in the visit. We are encouraging social distancing and any visitation that takes place should use precautions and keep children home when they are very sick and/or have a fever. However, when preparing for a visit, please ask the following three questions in order to determine whether the visits should take place.

Does the person with whom the child will visit have any of the following symptoms?

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If so, please do not provide the scheduled contact/visit and contact OCFS.

### **Monthly Face-to-Face Contacts**

At this time, OCFS will be suspending all in person face-to face monthly visits through the end of April, at which time the protocol will be reviewed. To ensure that OCFS is remaining connected to youth, parents and resource parents, it is expected that staff will coordinate contact to occur through phone calls or video conferencing for all families that need to be seen through the end of April 2020.

### **Family Team Meetings**

Social distancing is the key to minimizing exposure. Whenever possible, staff should convene/facilitate Family Team Meetings through phone calls or video conferencing.

### **Court**

AAGs will be working with the judges locally to try to minimize in-person court appearances. Some will still be necessary, and caseworkers will need to contact the AAG by e-mail, phone or text prior to the court date to coordinate activities to in preparation for court.

Thank you for the vital service you provide.